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Sen. Alfonse D'Amato, R-N.Y., said Thursday that Vatican officials told him they suspected Soviet Union complicity in the attempted assassination of Pope John Paul II.

D'Amato said a recent Readers Digest article and a NBC documentary pointing to Soviet involvement "coincide very closely with information given me by Vatican officials during my visit to Rome in October of 1981."

In a four-paragraph statement, D'Amato said, "My own conversations with high level Vatican officials completely confirm these charges of Soviet complicity in the attempted assassination of the Pope.

"It is time the western world woke up to the hard fact that a great deal of evidence points to the conclusion that the Soviet Union was very likely the silent partner in one of the most dastardly acts of our time," he said.

D'Amato visited the Vatican during his trip to Italy October 5-13, 1981.

The Vatican official who provided the information, according to D'Amato, was involved in shuttle diplomacy between the Vatican and the Kremlin at the time Pope John Paul II sent his message to Leonid Brezhnev about Poland.

D'Amato said he relayed the information to the Central Intelligence Agency when he returned to the United States.